S-E-C-R-E-T

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

CONFIDENTIAL

Copy No. 20

GEOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE REPORT

THE KURDS IN 1959

CIA/RR GR L-60-2

March 1960

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

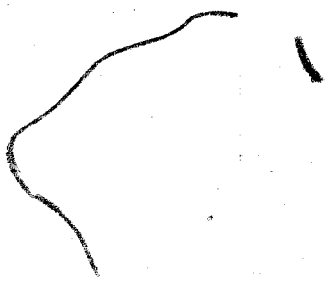
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

S-E-C-R-E-T

WARNING

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, Title 18, USC, Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.



GEOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE REPORT

THE KURDS IN 1959

CIA/RR GR L-60-2

March 1960

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Office of Research and Reports

CONTENTS

		Page
I.	The People	1
	A. Tribal Origins	1
	B. Organization and Leadership	3
	C. Attitudes	4
II.	Tribal Relationships	5
	A. Tribal Coalitions	5
	B. Tribal Disunity	5
	C. Dissatisfaction With Current Conditions	7
III.	Activities of Parent Governments	8
	A. Iran	8
	1. Government Pressure	8
	2. Impact of the Iraqi Revolution	10
	3. Continued Government Distrust	11
	B. Iraq	12
	1. The Unity Theme	12
	2. Increasing Pressure in 1959	14
	C. Turkey	15
	D. United Arab Republic	17
IV.	Kurdish National Movements	19
	A. The Rise of Kurdish Nationalism	19
	B. Nationalism Today	22
	C. Prospects for Autonomy	25

Map

	Following Page
Locational Map	25

THE KURDS IN 1959

I. The People

A. Tribal Origins

Kurds are the major element of the population in the mountainous areas of southeastern Turkey, northeastern Iraq, and northwestern Iran and form a high percentage of the population in the foothills of northern Syria and portions of southwestern Armenia (see accompanying map). These predominantly Kurdish areas, which have never been a formal political entity and are difficult to define precisely, are known collectively as Kurdistan, the land of the Kurds.

The Kurds are an ancient people of mixed Semitic and Caucasian strains. Early Greek historians and geographers mention people who appear to have been Kurds and, in some instances, describe them as living in the area now referred to as Kurdistan. Arab writers have used the term "Kurd" since the IX Century. The isolated mountain areas inhabited by the Kurds have been largely bypassed by modernization and the influence of Westernization. Although at one time they were almost exclusively a nomadic people, many of the present-day Kurds have adopted a more settled agricultural life, especially along the fringes of their hill country. Others have migrated to urban areas in search of a livelihood and now constitute large, very low income groups in cities such as Baghdad and Damascus. A few, mostly from influential families, have been thoroughly Westernized and have become successful economically and politically. The rank and file of the Kurds, however, are still isolated

nomadic and seminomadic agricultural people. They are illiterate and impoverished and are dependent upon their tribal leader or landlord -- in most instances one and the same person -- for support and guidance.

No reliable figures on Kurdish population are available. Estimates from countries in which the Kurds reside are all based on inadequate sampling that may well have been altered to suit political ends. Estimates of the total number of Kurds vary from 3,000,000 to 9,000,000. It is reasonable to assume that they number between 5 and 5-1/2 million and are distributed as follows:

Turkey	3,000,000
Iran	1,000,000
Iraq	1,000,000
Syria	150,000
USSR	100,000

In addition to the concentrations found in the predominantly Kurdish areas, urban centers such as Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus, and Teheran have sizeable Kurdish colonies. Isolated groups of rural Kurds are found in Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan.

The Kurdish language may be divided into two groups of dialects: Kurmanji, spoken in northwestern Kurdistan; and Kurdi, spoken in southeastern Kurdistan. Hundreds of variant dialects related to these two major groups are known by their local names. Sorani, the dialect used by most of the important tribes of Iraq and by most nationalist-inclined Iraqi urban dwellers, is widely understood in the Mahabad area of Iran. In Iraq, written Kurdish uses a modified Persian script, but the Kurds of Turkey and Iran do not have their own written language. The Kurds of the Soviet Union communicate in the Cyrillic alphabet, with some

additional symbols. Without the unifying influence of a common alphabet, some spoken dialects have diverged to a point of mutual unintelligibility. In outlying areas, many Kurds have been assimilated linguistically by their neighbors to such an extent that their speech resembles Turkish, Arabic, or Farsi more closely than the original Kurdish.

B. Organization and Leadership

The social, political, and economic organization under which the rural Kurds live has been handed down through the centuries. Members of the ruling family of a tribe bear the title "Agha" or "Beg," placed after their name. Another type of tribal leader is the "Sheikh," a title given to religious leaders associated with mystical orders. Through a reputation for ability to perform miracles, sheiks have acquired worldly followings and for all practical purposes have become tribal chieftans.

The sheikh or agha is in essence a feudal baron who represents and is spokesman for the tribe. He does no physical work but negotiates with the government, conducts intertribal business, and settles disputes within the tribe. The tribe supports its leader through systems of sharecropping and direct contributions. In many cases the tribe has no title to the land it uses other than traditional grazing rights, not even to the land surrounding settled agricultural villages.

Some of the tribal leaders have formally taken legal possession of tribal lands with a view to safeguarding their income. Those who did not or could not take this step have found their income reduced sharply, often because tribesmen refused to adhere to customs of the traditional feudal organization.

C. Attitudes

The outstanding characteristic of the Kurds has been the desire to be left alone to conduct their own affairs, to speak their own language, and to run their own schools. They have universally resisted attempts to bring about social and political changes. Nevertheless, there has been little basic unity in Kurdish areas. Problems are attacked on a local level, and the resulting solutions are applicable to local situations only. Suspicion of Arab, Turkish, or Iranian institutions is outspoken. Taxes paid for schools and medical facilities that never materialize are ample evidence to a Kurd that the central government is not responsive to his desires.

In many instances, leaders who could no longer restrain their animosity toward central authority have taken arms against the government. Some of these uprisings have been put down only after considerable difficulty. The Kurd uses his rifle effectively and takes full advantage of the mountainous terrain in defending his native countryside. Today, however, the dashing "trigger-happy" horseman is no match for forces that effectively employ aircraft and unit communications. If properly equipped and led, the Kurds have a great potential for harassment and guerrilla warfare, but they are no longer capable of meeting organized armies on terms of equality. Furthermore, scattered villages within Kurdistan have broken sharply with tradition by refusing to acknowledge the dictums of their feudal landlords. Even the tribal leaders, once a turbulent lot, are likely not to take arms against the government. Under pressure from the Qassim regime, most of the leaders

in Iraq have reacted passively or have dodged the issue by departing the country, only to return later in a passive role. Such nontraditional reactions are not universal, but they are symptomatic of changes among the Kurds. The shift away from tradition has been slow in starting, largely because changes come last to isolated areas such as Kurdistan.

II. Tribal Relationships

A. Tribal Coalitions

Tribal coalitions are continually being formed and reformed. At times they are concluded tongue-in-cheek as a means to an end, with little thought of cooperative action. Although some result from long-standing friendships, others are concluded in a time of crisis in apparent disregard of former disputes. Tribal attitudes toward their respective governments -- cooperation, tolerance, or active opposition -- are adopted with a view toward safeguarding the immediate interests of the tribe or its leaders. At present, no Middle Eastern government enjoys the wholehearted support of the Kurdish population, and past performance indicates that personal ambitions and animosities make lasting agreements between the tribes or with a government unlikely.

B. Tribal Disunity

The attitude of a Kurdish tribe towards its leaders, other Kurds, or a government is extremely difficult to define. In day to day life the Kurd is strongly influenced by tradition and is a master of watchful waiting; in a crisis he is an individualist, often an opportunist. Not only are there differences of opinion between the tribes, but a single tribe is seldom of one mind. To most Kurds a "great Kurd" is a local

leader and in instances in which a leader's fame has spread across Kurdistan, this prestige has not brought with it control of intertribal affairs. The late Omar Khan Shikak was regarded by most Iranian Kurds and by the Iranian Government as the "grand old man" and was treated with commensurate social respect, but his influence even within his own tribe was not complete. Such lack of general support of Kurdish leaders is indicative of the disunity that exists among the Kurds and has seriously hampered effective Kurdish organization.

The disorganization and vacillation that characterizes tribal relationships results from a complex association of circumstances. Various tribes and even groups within a single tribe are in many cases physically separated from each other by inhospitable terrain. Poor communication from one settled valley to the next, particularly during the winter, tends to promote an isolation of thought and action. In addition, tribal boundaries cut across international boundaries, and the differences in political climates in the various countries in which the tribesmen live further hinders the attainment of Kurdish unity. Past experiences have promoted varying degrees of distrust and contempt for central authority among the tribes. Some view Soviet motives with the same distaste they accord the motives of the national leaders of the countries in which they live. Within a tribe, family feuds, often based on political issues, are not soon forgotten and constitute a source of major conflict. Further the restlessness that accompanies the breadown of traditional values creates a distrust of tribal leadership and destroys tribal solidarity. Religious affiliations also influence alignment of

Kurdish elements. Mystic sects, such as the Naqshabandi, have followings that cut across tribal lines. Although most Kurds belong to the Sunni Moslem sect, religious conflicts occur between the liberal Alawi and very conservative Shafi followers within the sect.

C. Dissatisfaction With Current Conditions

Dissatisfaction with the government and present conditions is widespread among the tribes. Its greatest expression is found in Iraq. The rise of the UAR and the formation of the union of Jordan with Iraq were viewed with alarm by Iraqi Kurds, and the propaganda by the Qassim government for brotherhood among Arabs and Kurds was considered a forerunner of Arab domination. The unrest associated with the Iraqi revolution, the return of Mulla Mustafa Barzani from the USSR,* and the attempt to assassinate Qassim have intensified political activity among the Kurds; but no simple pattern of Kurdish sentiment has yet evolved. Most Kurdish tribes do not support the Qassim government owing to a fear of Arab nationalism, and the widespread distrust of the Mulla Mustafa is heightened by his association with both the Iraq Government and the USSR. Many Kurds view Soviet authoritarian techniques, experienced at the time of the Mahabad Republic,** as an evil equal to the tactics of the governments of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and the UAR.

---

* Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the rebellious Kurdish leader from the Barzan area of northern Iraq, fled to the USSR in 1946. After the fall of the Monarchy in 1958, he was invited to return to Iraq and was responsible for the repatriation of an estimated 800 Communist-indoctrinated Iraqi Kurds from the USSR in April 1959.

** The Soviet-supported Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was established on Iranian soil in December 1945 and disbanded in December 1946. The Republic, situated east of the Iraqi border and south of Lake Urmia, encompassed an area scarcely more than 100 miles long and 70 miles wide.

The unpredictable behavior of Kurdish tribes in Iraq is well illustrated by one episode in 1959. Pressure from the Qassim government for land reform, the threat of arrest, and the aggressive policies of Mulla Mustafa Barzani and of Communist organizers brought about an ineffective Baradost tribal uprising, followed by the defection of the Baradost, Harki, and Sindi tribes to Iran and Turkey in the spring of 1959. Shortly thereafter, in the late summer and fall of 1959, disenchantment with conditions encountered in Iran and Turkey and promises of food and arms from the Iraqi government influenced many of these people to return once again to Iraq.

III. Activities of Parent Governments

A. Iran

1. Government Pressure

In an attempt to control its Kurdish problem, the government of Iran has used a combination of threats and promises. A patently inconsistent official policy toward the Kurds has been administered in an even less consistent manner. The air of contempt that permeates government approaches to the Kurds is matched by Kurdish contempt in their relationships with government authorities. The degree of control over Kurdish areas has been in proportion to Iranian military strength, but the rough terrain and underdeveloped nature of northwestern Iran precludes absolute control. Given the opportunity, the Kurds are prone to ignore central authority. The government is well aware that the establishment of the Republic of Mahabad on Iranian soil would not have been possible if an internal force had been on hand to prevent it.

Poor administration has characterized government contacts in Kurdish areas for many years. Government representatives, the army in particular, have been highhanded in their approach to the Kurds. A Kurd is generally considered dirty, uneducated, uncooperative, unreliable, and generally inferior to an Iranian. Military commanders have made arbitrary decisions unmindful of local need, tradition, or the stature of local personalities; and army units in the field have appropriated Kurdish property without compensation. Poor liaison within the government has created further misunderstandings and has additionally complicated already difficult situations.

The development of Kurdish areas has been slow, educational and medical facilities have been neglected, and the general welfare of the people has been of little concern to Teheran. As the younger Kurds break with tradition and acquire an education, the government has found the Kurdish problem increasingly difficult to handle. Often-repeated charges of Iranian corruption and maladministration are given wider and more prominent distribution among the Kurds, and the generally low economic level that most Kurds have had to endure for generations becomes less generally acceptable.

In some quarters of the government the poor state of affairs among the Kurds is recognized, and occasional attempts have been made to create a more favorable atmosphere and to improve the quality of intelligence on the Kurds. Discussions were held in April 1958 to consider setting up a committee to handle Kurdish affairs, the July 1958 revolt in Iraq brought to the fore a sentiment favoring a reexamination of

Kurdish policy in Iran, and National Intelligence and Security Organization (SAVAK) has urged improvement in the handling of Kurdish matters. Nevertheless, coordinated action has not materialized to any notable extent. Development programs on the books have been slow in getting started, and the program for "keeping the Kurds happy" has boiled down to increased propaganda -- leaving a wide gulf between talk and action.

2. Impact of the Iraqi Revolution

Following the revolution in Iraq in 1958, the government of Iran stepped up propaganda aimed at the Kurds. Radio time devoted to Kurdish broadcasts was increased, with programs originating from Teheran, Kermanshah, Sanandaj, and, in February 1959, from Rezaieh. By the end of 1959, Kurdish programs were also being broadcast from Tabriz and Mahabad. The chief themes of programs beamed to the Kurds have been loyalty to the Shah, Iran as the homeland of all Kurds, and the danger of Communism. More rapid development for the Kurds has been promised, and in June 1959 a concession was made in the establishment of the independent Governorate of Kordestan, which includes an area of western Iran having a substantial Kurdish population.

A new aspect of the Kurdish situation received wide attention in the late spring and summer of 1959, when large numbers of Iraqi Kurds crossed into Iran. A variety of circumstances contributed to these crossings, chief among them being the pressure exerted upon the Kurds by Iraq. A more lenient attitude toward the Kurds in Iran and the theme that all Kurds were welcome in their Iranian homeland probably also played a part, and the fact that much of the border was loosely guarded facilitated

immigration. At the time of these migrations, some consideration was given to the idea of attracting all prominent Kurdish leaders to Iran and isolating them, thus ending Kurdish national movements once and for all.

Mindful of the economic plight and restless outlook of displaced persons, Iran made small donations to tribal leaders arriving from Iraq. The question of arms in Kurdish hands was handled in whatever manner seemed most expedient at the moment. In some instances, arms were collected from new arrivals and receipts issued; in other cases, arms were issued to them. In all cases, an effort was made to watch Kurdish activities closely and to isolate individual trouble makers. Tribal leaders were intensively interrogated shortly after their arrival in Iran.

During this period, coordination of Kurdish affairs was -- as always -- deficient and no general policy was evident. Local officials were often highhanded and arbitrary. The government was not generous enough in its donations nor convincing enough in its promises to sway traditional distrust of central authority. When pressures in Iraq were relaxed, many tribesmen decided to return to home pastures. Most of their leaders, whether they thought it wise or not, returned to Iraq with their tribesmen to avoid losing what authority they still possessed.

3. Continued Government Distrust

Iran basically distrusts the Kurds and Kurdish nationalism; armed Kurds are especially disturbing to Teheran. In government circles the sentiment is common that the best procedure is to discourage Iraqi Kurds

from defecting to Iran but to maintain liaison with them within Iraq. Some doubt persists as to the wisdom of continuing to allow annual migrations of Kurdish tribes -- such as the Harki -- to Iranian pastures. The relative efficiency displayed in the November 1959 arrest of some 80 persons said to be part of a Communist Kurdish movement based in Iraq is evidence that a close watch on subversive activity is being maintained.

The Iranian Government has made little headway in its attempts to influence the Kurds. The gulf between words and deeds has been too wide and old tensions remain. Improvements that have taken place tend to benefit the government as much or more than the Kurds. New roads may improve the economy of the area, but they also make army movement and control of the area easier. The project financed by the United States for the construction of army barracks at Khaneh on the Iraqi border has stimulated the economy of a limited area. Of even greater interest to the Kurds is the fact that by the spring of 1960 the barracks will accommodate an Iranian Army division deep in Kurdish territory.

B. Iraq

1. The Unity Theme

The effort of the Qassim government to put an end to the Kurdish problem in Iraq has centered on the unity theme. Official statements on the brotherhood of all Iraqis have flooded the press and radio from the early days of the Qassim government and still continue. Much was made of the Mulla Mustafa Barzani's return from the Soviet Union, but Mulla Mustafa has not been featured since the initial impact of his

return died down. Inducements have been offered to gain the cooperation of the tribes; but, with the exception of the limited numbers who have reacted to the appeal of Communism, traditional Kurdish dislike for things Arab remains. The Qassim government has not convinced the Kurds that prosperity and fair treatment have replaced conditions existing under previous governments.

Attempts to influence Kurdish political attitudes have sometimes used the soft approach and at other times, a tough approach. In several instances, conferences of Kurdish leaders were called to reconcile their differences and line them up on the side of the government. Khalid Naqshabandi reportedly toured Kurdish areas for the government, using his religious influence in an attempt to settle tribal disputes. On other occasions attempts were made to buy tribal loyalty with cash payments, many of which were accepted. In the fall of 1958, development funds were weighted heavily in favor of Kurdish areas and at a later date extensive improvements for Barzan village were announced. Nevertheless, "Death to traitors" was broadcast as the penalty for defiance of the unity program.

Baghdad radio has beamed a steady flow of material to the Kurds, leaning heavily on the "Kurdish fight for freedom" theme. Editorial comment has stressed mistreatment of the Kurds by the former government, plots of "imperialists," the plight of suppressed peasants, the benefits of land reform, and the "downtrodden" condition of the Kurds of Iran. Testimonials from Kurds, telegrams from Kurdistan, and eulogies for Kurdish martyrs have appeared repeatedly in Iraqi broadcasts and press releases.

Another approach to the breaking of tribal authority has been pressure for land reform. The feudal attitude of tribal leaders toward the peasants has been widely publicized, but relatively little has been done to implement the mission of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform. The Ministry's activities have apparently been weighted heavily in favor of appeals to the tribesmen, but at the same time an effort has been made to avoid changing too much too rapidly.

2. Increasing Pressure in 1959

The spring of 1959 was an uneasy period for both the government and the Kurds. The government provided basic military training for selected Kurds but was upset because arms were held by "questionable" tribes. In May 1959, some tribal lands were taken from several of the leaders in the Sulaimaniya area; and, in the face of such increasing government pressure, a number of tribes fled into Turkey and Iran. Among them were the Baradost tribesmen, led by Sheikh Rashid of Lolan, who had skirmished with government forces before seeking asylum in Turkey. Iraq, nevertheless, maintained clandestine contact with the refugees; and, in response to assurances of a softer Kurdish policy, many returned to Iraq in the late summer and fall of 1959. Returning tribesmen received food, money, and, in some cases, were reportedly issued arms to defend themselves against "Communist bands." Officials of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform also reportedly circulated through Kurdish areas telling tribesmen to wait patiently for land reform and to respect the property of their landlords. Earlier in the summer the government had agreed not to distribute the lands of the Begzadeh chiefs if they would agree to take

no more than 5 percent of production as their share and promise not to molest the workers. In September a new and vaguely worded refugee law was passed, which stated that no person would be deported to his country of origin. In October the Ministry of Agrarian Reform announced that all of its statements would be published in Kurdish as well as Arabic. Additional attempts to appease the Kurds include announcement of the addition of Kurdish language, literature, and history to the list of courses offered at the College of Letters in Baghdad; proposals for an Academy of Kurdish Language at Sulaimaniya; and the establishment of a Directorate General of Kurdish Affairs. To date little has been done to implement the activities of these institutions.

The government of Iraq has attempted to monitor Kurdish activities, and efforts have been made to provide arms to the Kurds only when they would be used for purposes acceptable to the government either of Iraq or a neighboring country. Iraq receives some information on Kurdish activities through politically indoctrinated informers in Kurdish organizations, in the customs service, in the police, and in the army. No estimate is available of the depth or reliability of the government's penetration of Kurdish affairs. The Communist Party of Iraq and the Popular Resistance Force have apparently been used to counter tribal influence, but it has been difficult to identify such activities as the exclusive product of these or other antitribal organizations.

C. Turkey

Turkey maintains officially that there is no Kurdish problem in Turkish territory, but there is every indication that the Kurdish problem

worries the Turks today, as it has for many years. A concerted campaign to "Turkify" the Kurds has not succeeded in destroying the identity of the Kurdish tribes of eastern Turkey. To counter the wilful lack of cooperation by the Kurds, tight security controls surround all Kurdish activities within the country.

The Turkish Government has attempted to break the tribal system by bringing Kurds into many phases of national life, by inserting Turks into Kurdish affairs, and by limiting contact between Turkish Kurds and Kurds of neighboring countries. The government does not recognize the need for annual migrations of Kurds to pastures beyond the national border, and tribes considered "unstable" have been removed from border areas. Security forces maintain close surveillance of border areas, but there is some evidence of conflicts of responsibilities and operations in the administration of Kurdish affairs. Although a Kurdish section has been established within the Turkish National Security Service (TNSS), both the Ministry of Interior and the Turkish General Staff have also taken an active interest in the activities of the Kurds.

There were some indications in 1957, when a number of tribes began to return to traditional grazing areas in eastern and southeastern Turkey, that the long standing government pressure on the Kurds was beginning to be relaxed. The Iraqi Revolution and subsequent unrest, however, have brought about renewed concern for the "welfare" of the Kurds. Simultaneously, discussion of Kurdish affairs in the press was banned, security was tightened, and it became evident that the Turkish Government was well aware of its Kurdish problem.

The refugees who arrived in Turkey from Iraq in the spring of 1959 were closely watched. While in Turkey, they were treated in much the same manner that Turkey has treated other Kurds. For the most part, the refugees chose repatriation to enforced settlement in interior Turkey. Since repatriation was considered the easiest solution to the refugee problem, no effort was made to encourage Iraqi Kurds to cross into or to remain in Turkey.

Kurds are found in all walks of Turkish life and even hold important political and military positions. Many nontribal Kurds, however, are still actively interested in the minority problem. Since the government is not sure which of these Kurds can be trusted, a close watch is maintained on Kurdish university students, on Kurdish political activities, and on Kurdish factions in the army.

A nominal increase in road building and economic development has been accomplished in eastern Turkey. Opening the area to road traffic has probably been promoted -- as in Iran -- with the idea of facilitating military movement and control rather than of improving Kurdish welfare. In the spring of 1959, consideration was given to setting up new broadcasting facilities to increase propaganda directed toward the Kurds.

D. United Arab Republic

The UAR has approached the Kurdish minority problem by applying rigid internal controls and by attempting to isolate Syrian Kurds from nationalistic agitation originating in other countries. The Kurds of the UAR, unlike those of Iraq and Iran, do not benefit from the relative freedom of action found in isolated mountain areas or in solidly Kurdish

areas. As a result, the government has been able to monitor Kurdish activity with relative ease and is fully capable of dealing with dissident Kurds within its borders.

The present Arab nationalist approach of the UAR leaves little room for Kurdish aspirations. The trend of the past 30 years, during which Syrian Kurds experienced less discrimination than Kurds in neighboring countries, has recently been reversed. Kurds have been dismissed from the army, relieved from civil administrative positions, and prevented from working in industries associated with national defense. Kurdish students in Damascus have been arrested when they appeared to be active politically. Charges of taking part in Communist activity are easily extended to include any activity looked upon with disfavor by the government.

Kurdish national identity in the UAR is further limited by strict control of the press (Kurdish newspapers were banned in December 1958). At the same time, a distinctive Kurdish tribal headgear was outlawed. Listening to Kurdish language broadcasts has also been banned, but Cairo Radio beams Kurdish nationalist material to both Iraq and Iran. UAR propaganda aimed at the Kurds has made no promises of Kurdish independence and is generally more objective than that from Baghdad. In addition, land reform has reduced the incomes of potentially influencial Kurdish leaders in eastern Syria, and harsh penalties have been established for those who contact Iraqi Kurds.

IV. Kurdish National Movements

A. The Rise of Kurdish Nationalism

Kurdish national movements and sporadic insurrections have taken place over a period of more than one hundred years. Not until the end of World War I, however, were the seeds of modern Kurdish nationalism planted. The defeat of Turkey in 1918 paved the way for Kurdish representation in the formulation of the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. This document acknowledged the existence of a well-developed Kurdish community and called for provisional recognition of an independent Kurdistan made up of territory that today comprises part of southeastern Turkey. The Treaty of Sèvres was never ratified, and in July 1923 it was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, which ignored the Kurdish minority.

In the years that followed, the dream of an independent Kurdistan was kept alive by conflict between the Kurds and the governments of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. The Turkish policy of assimilating the Kurds met with armed Kurdish resistance in 1923 and again in 1925. Many of the refugees of these unsuccessful outbreaks fled to Syria, where the Hoybon Committee (Independence Committee) was formed in 1927 to carry forward the drive for an independent Kurdistan. In the same year, a series of outbreaks occurred in the Mount Ararat district of Turkey. Not until 1930 was this movement defeated and Ihsan Nuri Pasha forced to take refuge in Teheran. In 1937 the Kurds were again aroused by Turkish attempts at assimilation. For almost a year the conflict flared in the Dersim area, where Kurds have claimed that women and children were massacred as the menfolk fought back from the hills. Since that

time, Turkish tactics have continued to be forceful and the official position has been that the "mountain Turks have been fully and peacefully assimilated."

The Kurds of Iraq have been equally restive. Sheikh Mahmud, son of Sheikh Said of the Baban tribe, welcomed the British in 1918 and was appointed Governor of Southern Kurdistan. Sheikh Mahmud's personal ambitions, however, led to an open break with the British in 1919; he was deported, was returned as Governor in 1922, but fought continually against the government from 1924 to 1932. In the Barzan area a confederacy of tribes fighting under the leadership of Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan was in 1932 defeated by government forces with the aid of the RAF. Sheikh Ahmed and his brother Mulla Mustafa Barzani were placed in forced residence in Sulaimaniya. When Iraq joined the League of Nations in 1932, commitments were made regarding the welfare of minority groups; but the spirit of these agreements was never fully carried out and the Kurds fared poorly. In 1942 widespread discontent accompanied serious food shortages in Kurdish areas of Iraq. At this time Mulla Mustafa broke arrest in Sulaimaniya and returned to Barzan village. Negotiations between the Kurds and the government were interrupted by a pitched battle between Barzanis and Iraqi police. A truce was reached in the spring of 1944, and Mulla Mustafa was pardoned and Sheikh Ahmed released from custody. The following year the Barzanis again defied the government. In October 1945, Mulla Mustafa, Sheikh Ahmed, and about 1,000 armed Barzanis were driven into Iran by Iraqi forces supported by Kurdish tribesmen. Shortly thereafter, Mulla Mustafa and his men joined Qazi Mohammad and the Mahabad Republic.

In Iran, the Kurds took advantage of the disrupting influence of World War I to divorce themselves from the influence of Teheran. Ismail Agha Simitko of the Shikkak tribe secured control over the area west of Lake Urmia in 1918 and for 4 years ruled supreme. In the area north of Halebja, Jaafar Sultan of the Avroman tribe was able to maintain his independence until 1925. Beginning in 1922, however, Reza Shah pressed a policy of deporting tribal leaders, which proved effective in preventing organized outbreaks. With the collapse of the Iranian army in 1941, Kurdish leaders seized the opportunity to rise again. Mohammad Hama Rashid of the Baneh Begzadehs assumed control of the Sardash-Baneh-Saqqiz region, which was situated between the areas controlled by the Russians and by the British. The government was forced to recognize his authority; but a Kurd -- Mahmud Agha of Kani Senan -- with Iranian army support, forced Rashid to flee to Iraq in 1945.

The most recent and most significant move to establish an independent state was the creation of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. There is little evidence of aggressive Soviet activity in the early stages of their occupation of northwestern Iran which began in 1941; but in 1945 the Communists made good use of Kurdish nationalist sentiments. The Komala, originally a secret Kurdish nationalist organization founded in 1943, was taken over by the Soviets. Soviet pressure gained admittance to the Komala for Qazi Mohammad in April 1945, and he rose rapidly to party leadership. The Soviets took Qazi and a number of Kurdish tribal leaders on a whirlwind visit to the USSR in September 1945 for additional "guidance." Upon their return, Qazi announced the formation of the

Democratic Party of Kurdistan, which rapidly replaced the Komala and absorbed its membership. On 11 October 1945, Mulla Mustafa Barzani and his small army, which increased to 3,000 men by the end of the month, entered Iran and, by Soviet order, was placed at the disposal of Qazi Mohammad. On 15 December 1945, Qazi proclaimed the founding of the Republic of Mahabad; a 13-member national parliament was formed; and, on 22 January 1946, Qazi Mohammad was elected president of the new republic. The venture ended in December 1946 because of tribal opposition, a rash of internal dissension, an increasingly aggressive attitude in Teheran, the withdrawal of Soviet support, and the defeat of Mulla Mustafa Barzani and his flight to the USSR.

B. Nationalism Today

Today the desire for an independent Kurdistan is perhaps strongest in the minds of the older generation. When Kurdish communities were truly isolated and before many individual Kurds had found a place in the political and economic life of their countries, it was a relatively easy matter to stir a Kurdish faction into armed protest against the injustice of the central government. Present Kurdish leaders, however, are for the most part urban dwelling individuals accustomed to the amenities of modern living. Their sons have received formal education and have found places in business or professional circles; thus forming a politically conscious group that includes most of the true Kurdish Communists and anti-Communists. This younger generation feels a strong attachment to things Kurdish, but has a growing realization that the future of the Kurds lies in integration in the national scene and not in continued adherence to traditional values.

The formation of an autonomous Kurdish area, nevertheless, is still a very real issue in the minds of many Kurds. The name most frequently associated with Kurdish independence movements is that of Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Since his return from the Soviet Union, Mulla Mustafa has set himself up as "the leader of the Kurds," but he is not recognized as such by many of his fellow Kurds. He is variously reported to be a Communist, a foe of Communism, a supporter of Qassim, a foe of Qassim, a nationalist, and an individualist. The last is probably most nearly correct. The opportunity to gain prestige and advance his own material status has influenced him to give lip service to a number of apparently conflicting causes. Outwardly, he supports Qassim and from time to time has received the support of the Qassim government. It has been reported on several occasions that Mulla Mustafa would break all ties with the government of Iraq if Qassim were killed or replaced. Furthermore, there is little doubt that he maintains contact with the USSR and would be willing to accept Soviet support for his version of an independent Kurdistan.

Although never a very popular person among Kurdish tribal leaders, Mulla Mustafa has apparently made a concerted effort to gain the support of major tribes in Iraq. His name is also linked to a clandestine movement to draw support from Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Mulla Mustafa's association with both Qassim and the Soviets has prevented him from obtaining a wide following among either Kurdish tribal leaders or Communist factions. Mulla Mustafa and some 50 other persons, however, have received a license for the Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan,

which is not only a legal party for the expression of overt political aims but also a cover for organized clandestine activities.

The Communist movement appears to be centered in a coalition of the Democratic Party of Iraq (said to be headed by Mulla Mustafa and sometimes called the United Democratic Party of Iraq) and the Communist Party of Iraq (CPI). The head of the CPI, Hamza Abdollah, has reportedly been a close friend of Mulla Mustafa since the days of the Republic of Mahabad. Others reported to be working for a Communist Kurdistan include Khalid Naqshabandi, Colonel Tahir Mustafa Baramani of the Popular Resistance Force (PRF), and Sheikh Sulayman of the Barzani tribe.

No clear assessment of the Communist strength is currently available. Some Communist factions have been linked to the clandestine movement operating in Iran, Syria, and Turkey under direction from Iraq for the promotion of an independent Kurdistan. In 1959, members of a clandestine network arrested in Iran were thought by Iranian Kurds to be Communists rather than Kurdish nationalists.

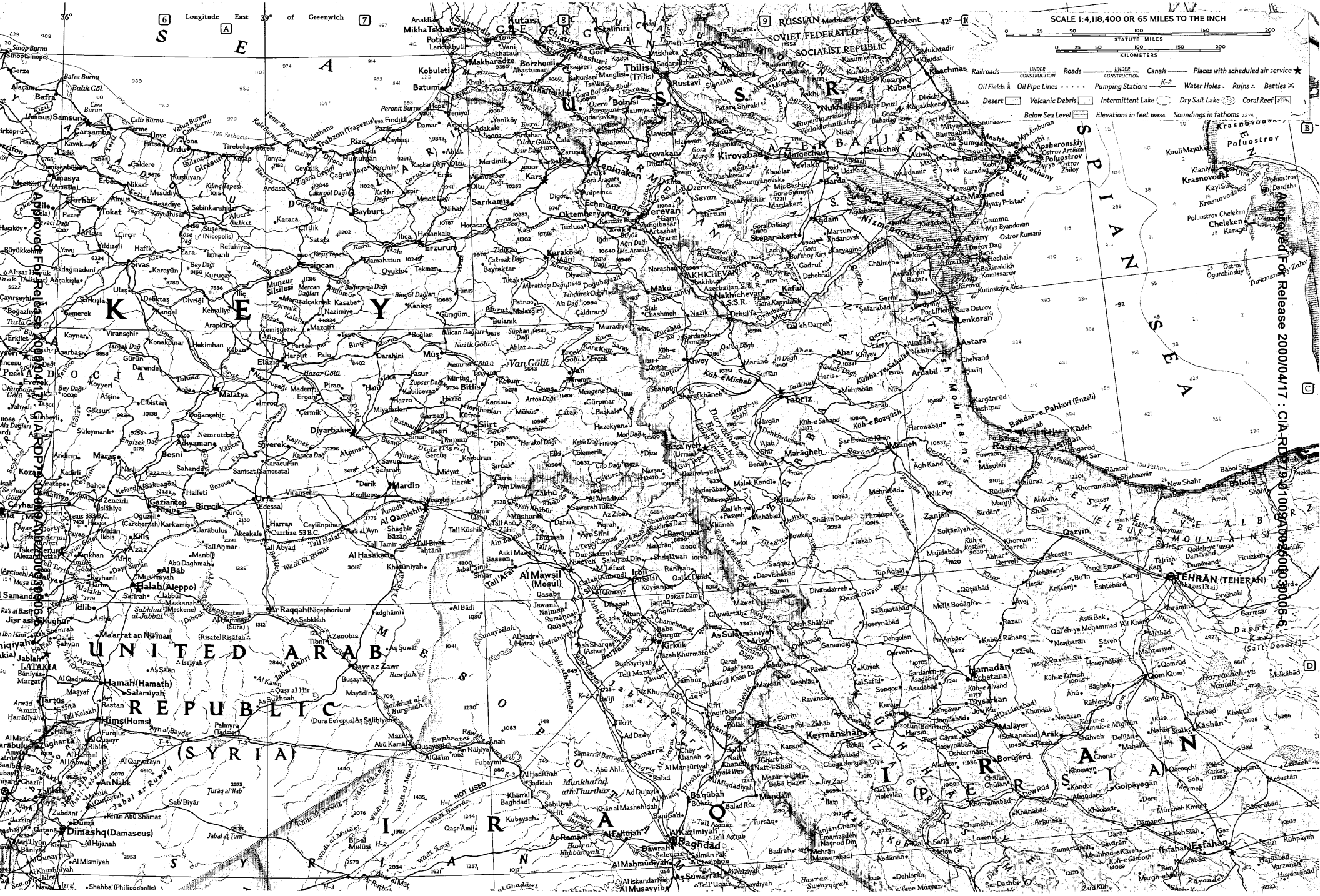
Kurdish nationalist alignments are contradictory. One of the few points of agreement is the realization that unity is essential to Kurdish success. Mulla Mustafa has met with Sheikh Latif Barzinja, Sheikh Rashid of Lolan, and others in attempts to define a Kurdish stand. Most leaders have favored an independent Kurdistan rather than one dominated by either Qassim or the Communists. Abbas Mamand Agha of the Ako tribe reportedly contacted numerous tribes -- including the Dizai, Harki, and Khusao -- in an unsuccessful effort to set up a united independence move behind Mulla Mustafa. Some leaders, such as Sheikh

Latif Barzinja, are reportedly going along with Mulla Mustafa in the belief that open opposition now would tend to strengthen rather than weaken his position. At the same time, Sheikh Latif and Hamid Beg Jaf are said to be quietly organizing a move to combat all Communist activity, including the Democratic Party of Kurdistan. Some quarters have begun to realize that intertribal friction, such as the fight between the Barzanis and Zibaris over the murder of the son of a Zibari chief, strengthens the Communist position in Kurdish areas.

C. Prospects for Autonomy

In the event of disturbances in Iran or Iraq that would seriously impair the effectiveness of the respective armies, the Kurds are capable of assuming control over their tribal areas. If left solely in Kurdish hands, such a venture would not be effectively organized. Should circumstances permit, however, the USSR would probably be ready to extend active support and direction to an autonomy movement. The Communist press in Iraq is providing for any contingency by calling for fulfillment of Kurdish national aspirations and, at the same time, condemning Kurdish nationalistic and separatist tendencies.

At present, all but one of the elements required for Kurdish autonomy are present -- the forces of violence are represented in the tribes; potential Kurdish leadership is found in the army, in political circles, and in professional ranks; and a channel for material support is available through Soviet representation in Iraq. Only the relative stability of parent governments stands in the way of active Kurdish separatism. Should the government of either Iran or Iraq fall, one result might well be the establishment of a second Kurdish Republic.


SCALE 1:4,118,400 OR 65 MILES TO THE INCH
STATUTE MILES
KILOMETERS
Railroads
Roads
Canals
Places with scheduled air service
Oil Fields
Oil Pipe Lines
Pumping Stations
Water Holes
Ruins
Battles
Desert
Volcanic Debris
Intermittent Lake
Dry Salt Lake
Coral Reef
Below Sea Level
Elevations in feet
Soundings in fathoms
Longitude East of Greenwich
SOVIET FEDERATED SOCIALIST REPUBLIC
RUSSIAN
GEORGIAN S.S.R.
ARMENIAN S.S.R.
AZERBAIJAN S.S.R.
NAKHICHEVAN A.S.S.R.
TURKEY
IRAN
IRAQ
SYRIA
UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC
CASPIAN SEA
Approved For Release 2000/04/17 : CIA-RDP79-01009A000300060006-6